

**Picking a culinary school is a crucial step in your culinary career. Here is a step-by-step guide to help you choose the one that's right for you.**

### **Step 1 - Figure out what you want to do after you graduate.**

Do you want to start a catering company, make pastries and fancy desserts, or how about manage a restaurant? Once you have an idea of what it is you would like to specialize in, you can limit your search to only those schools that offer the necessary classes.

### **Step 2 - Determine what's most important to you in a school.**

Some of the areas you may want to think about before choosing a school are:

- Location
- Entry requirements
- Length of program and class schedule
- Costs and financial aid
- Class size
- Classroom facilities
- School's faculty and reputation
- Degrees and accreditations
- Location and housing
- Schools contacts, job placement, internships

### **Step 3 - Create a list of schools to contact for more information**

If you don't find a school close enough or that strikes your fancy, try doing a search on the Internet. Just type in "cooking schools" or "culinary schools" and you will find hundreds of leads to schools worldwide. Type in "culinary schools with a city or state" and it will narrow down the field even more.

Once you find a few schools that look promising, fill out the information form for more information. Typically someone will call you within a day or two to answer your questions, provide you with additional information and offer to send you some brochures and an application.

Be sure to have a list of questions you want answered when you speak with a schools representative. You might also ask for a list of current students and graduates to contact for their assessment of the school.

This is also a good time to ask about scholarships and what the school has to offer. If financing is going to be an issue, it's better to find out alternatives now rather than wait until you have been accepted. Remember, the school representatives are there to help and most I've found don't push too hard although it is their job to sell you on the school.

#### **Step 4 - Narrow down the field.**

Once you look over what the schools have to offer and have spoken with the representatives, start eliminating those that just don't fit in with your needs. Maybe a school is too far, too costly or just doesn't offer the courses you are interested in taking.

#### **Step 5 - Visit the schools that fit best**

In my opinion, this is one of the most important steps you can do to make sure you are going to be happy at any cooking school. You want to see the actual classrooms you will be attending, see some of the teachers and students in action, get a feel for the surroundings to make sure you will fit in.

I once made the mistake of taking a new job on Wall Street with a competitor without ever seeing the offices I would be working in. Sure the money was better and I thought I would make faster advancement, but when I arrived for my first day of work, I couldn't believe the conditions I would be working in. The office space was old, dirty and outdated compared to where I was working. I was horrified.

So make sure the school you are thinking of investing your time and money is as good if not better than the brochure they send you.

#### **Step 6 - Apply to your top picks**

After you make your visits, narrow down the field to your top choices and prepare the applications you were sent. Be sure to be neat and complete and provide them with everything they ask you for. If you have any questions about the application, pick up the phone right away and get answers. You don't want to be sending in incomplete forms.

#### **Step 7 - Choose your school**

Once notified by the schools of your acceptance, you can decide which

school works best for you. Because you did your homework and followed the steps above, this final choice should be easy.

Be sure to inform the school of your choice that you will be attending and find out what steps are required to get you enrolled and what you will need to start school.

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